



Subject: Aurora's Christmas Market 2018
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Department: Community Services
Date: April 17, 2018

In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any Member of Council may request that this Information Report be placed on an upcoming General Committee or Council meeting agenda for discussion.

Executive Summary

This report provides Council with an overview of this year's Christmas Market (CM). As a result of the success of the mini-Christmas Market created in 2017, which was a featured activity at the Aurora's Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony (CTLC), it will now become a stand-alone event. This year's event will expand from a one-day, two (2) hour event to a three-day, 27-hour event. Until this event moves to its permanent home at Library Square in 2019, it will remain anchored outside and inside the Aurora Seniors Centre from Friday, November 30 to Sunday, December 2, 2018 inclusive.

- Expanded Aurora's Christmas Market will replace the stand-alone Aurora's Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony event
- Market to remain in its current location until construction is complete in Library Square
- Extensive planning is underway to expand the Christmas Market

Background

In 2017, Council recommended the creation of an outdoor Christmas Market to be held in Library Square. The long term vision of the Christmas Market is that it grows into an event similar to the Toronto Distillery Christmas Market. Due to demolition work scheduled at Library Square during December 2017, it wasn't a safe location and lacked the amenities necessary for an inaugural Christmas Market. As such, the Aurora's Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony in 2017, located in the front courtyard of Town Hall and Aurora Seniors Centre location included a mini Christmas Market that was well received and confirmed the community's appetite for this kind of event.

This report provides the program highlights for the expanded 2018 Aurora's Christmas Market.

Analysis

Expanded Aurora's Christmas Market will replace the stand-alone Aurora's Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony event

The CTLC in 2017 was two (2) hours in length and featured extensive programming such as, a theatrical performance, fire juggling show, live reindeer, festive ceremony, family crafts and games, Mrs. Claus' infamous readings, and the addition of a mini-Christmas Market. During Aurora's Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, the mini-Christmas Market quickly became the most talked about feature and was clearly one of the most anticipated activities for the attendees.

The CTLC is a successful event which continues to grow, and is currently one of the Top 100 Festivals and Events in Ontario. Given the long-term vision for the CM, it is beneficial to include the CTLC within the CM, versus having both as stand-alone events. Based on research, the focal point for many Christmas events includes the lighting of a large scale well-decorated Christmas tree within the event landscape. The elements of the current CTLC can be seamlessly woven into the CM's programming.

Moving forward, the features and activities of the CTLC will continue to be offered, but will be included within the CM programming. This three-day festival, happening from Friday, November 30 to Sunday, December 2, will open with the annual CTLC. The opening night will include the traditional activities and popular features that have always been part of the CTLC.

Market to remain in its current location until construction is complete in Library Square

The CM will be located in the inside and outside of Aurora Seniors Centre, in the parking lot, in The Petch House, as well as the front courtyard of the Aurora Town Hall. The same footprint from 2017 will be used this year. Significant staff resources were dedicated to ensuring this site was functional and safe, with the creation of an emergency safety plan. Having the event in the same location creates capacity for staff to focus on procuring exciting performers, entertainment and quality vendors.

Extensive planning is underway to expand the Christmas Market

This year's Christmas Market will include additional attractions and extended programming. The event program has been developed with two (2) objectives; to attract attendees and to keep those attendees coming back to the event three (3) days in a row. Acquisition and retention strategies are critical in creating this "must-attend" event. Throughout the weekend, the inclusive theme will be "Christmas Celebrations around the World".

Some of the essential features will include; unique seasonal vendors, dynamic live entertainment with both passive and engaging opportunities, community collaboration and participation, great food and hands-on experiences.

Holiday Shopping – Seasonal Vendors

There will be artisans, artists and vendors specializing in holidays gifts, set up indoors and outside throughout the event. Staff will strive to have some new vendors each day and some vendors remain throughout the weekend. This format provides guests the opportunity to shop from different vendors each day.

Dynamic Live Entertainment

The dynamic entertainment will include both passive and engaging opportunities to appeal to everyone. There will be different seasonal concerts and theatrical performances indoors throughout the event. The outside festivities will include buskers with wide range of talents possibly including; illusionists, fire juggling, fire eating, unicyclists and mascots. The busking talent showcased will be unique for the community to take-in and enjoy. No two (2) days of this event will be the same with each being equally magnetic.

Community Involvement and Collaboration

There will be opportunities for community organizations to participate in this event. Conversations are currently taking place with groups such as the Farmers Market, local churches, Aurora Public Library, Aurora Cultural Centre and Lions Club of Aurora and staff will reach out to others. Community collaboration at this stage is a priority as this provides time for organizations to evaluate if their participation is feasible. Involvement from these organizations will strengthen the CM.

Food for all Appetites

Successful events almost always involve great food. In trying to entice those attending on the Friday to return the next day, there will be a limited supply of free gingerbread cookie decorating coupons handed out on the Friday night, redeemable only on the Saturday. On the Saturday a limited amount of complimentary pancake brunch coupons will be handed out, redeemable on the Sunday.

The CM will include mouth-watering food options. A variety of food vendors will be providing flavorful tastes of the season. Efforts will be made to provide some hands-on activities such as gingerbread cookie decorating, decorating gingerbread houses and some cooking/baking demonstrations.

Unique Activities

There will be lots of free family activities and crafts throughout the weekend. Families will learn how Christmas is celebrated throughout the world through hands-on opportunities. Unique photo stations could be set up, creating the “must have selfie” experience. The popular live reindeer will be present and the community will have the opportunity to vote on which reindeer should visit Aurora. There will be engaging opportunities leading up to and throughout the event.

Staff will put every effort into creating a unique, engaging event.

Advisory Committee Review

None

Legal Considerations

Special Events staff will work with Legal Services to ensure the Town’s insurance requirements for vendors and performers are being met.

Financial Implications

The direct costs of the event was included in the 2018 budget. However, staff report CMS18-006 on the same agenda is addressing staffing concerns.

Communications Considerations

An extensive marketing plan would be developed for this event, and include tactics such as a media release, social media, event poster, event postcards event schedule, etc.

Link to Strategic Plan

This event would support the Strategic Plan goal of **Supporting an Exceptional Quality of Life for all** through its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within this goal statement: **Celebrating and promoting our culture** and **Strengthening the fabric of our community**.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

This is an Information Report, no alternatives provided.

Conclusions

Staff are eager to work with the community to develop a “must-attend” Christmas Market, that will be talked about throughout York Region. The programming features for this year’s event provides a trajectory towards the long-term vision for the event. Staff will continue to rely on best practices, market research, and feedback to ensure this event is authentic, successful and memorable as it continues to grow.

Attachments

None

Previous Reports

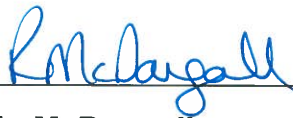
PRCS17-037 – November 7, 2017 – Aurora Outdoor Christmas Market

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on March 29, 2018

Departmental Approval

Approved for Agenda



Robin McDougall
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Community Services



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